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STATE FOR SCA/CEN, DRL

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [TX](#)
SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN GOVERNMENT APPROVES USCIRF VISIT FOR
AUGUST 19-24

REF: ASHGABAT 0741

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Charge met with Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Foreign Minister, Rashit Meredov, on July 27. Citing Secretary Rice that we have turned a new page in U.S.-Turkmenistan relations, Charge noted Turkmenistan's request to postpone the originally planned visit (reftel) had not been well-received in Washington. He pressed the government of Turkmenistan to approve the new dates proposed by the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) to visit Turkmenistan, August 19-24.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Meredov responded the government of Turkmenistan is open to discussing any and all issues with the United States, including religious freedom. He said the government is not -- he repeated not -- opposed to meeting this delegation, adding the government is not trying to avoid this issue or run away from its international responsibilities. Meredov asked for U.S. understanding that the number of meetings USCIRF has requested is unprecedented, and interagency coordination takes time.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Charge urged the government to give a positive response to this delegation no later than Monday, July 30. Meredov said he was almost certain there could be a response by that date.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Saturday, July 28, the Foreign Ministry called the Charge at noon to ask the Embassy to pick up the diplomatic note approving USCIRF's visit to Turkmenistan, August 19-24.
HOAGLAND